What is Diabetes?

Diabetes is a lifelong condition that causes a person's blood glucose (sugar) level to become too high.

Types of diabetes

There are two main types of diabetes, referred to as type 1 and type 2:
Type 2 is much more common and most of the people in hospital with diabetes will have type 2.

Type 1 diabetes is often referred to as insulin-dependent diabetes.
• In type 1 diabetes, the pancreas (a small gland behind the stomach) does not produce any insulin, which is a hormone that balances blood glucose levels. If the amount of glucose in the blood is too high for too long it can seriously damage the body's organs. People with type 1 diabetes often develop it as a child and will need insulin injections every day to stay healthy.

Type 2 diabetes
• Occurs when the body doesn't produce enough insulin to function properly, which is known as insulin resistance. People with type 2 diabetes often take tablets to help control their blood glucose levels.

Which Foods Should be Avoided?

Dietary intake can influence blood glucose control and all people with diabetes are encouraged to follow a healthy, balanced diet including foods from each of the food groups.

Traditionally advice has been to follow a low sugar diet. However with current treatments there is no specific diet for diabetes and there is no dietary coding on the menus for diabetes – Patients with diabetes can choose any items from the menu.

The right diet for the individual with diabetes will depend on their condition and the treatment they are on. Generally Patients will know themselves what they are able to eat so always take note of what the Patient requests. Some people who have had diabetes for a long time may avoid all sugary food. Others may take sugar and sugary puddings and have learned to adjust their medication according to what they eat.
For a healthy, balanced diet you need food from each of the main food groups:

Eat a good portion of a wide range of fruit and vegetables every day

Eat main proteins in the main meals

Eat fewer, but more often and in smaller amounts

Eat less often and in small amounts

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Implications for the Ward Housekeeper team

- It is essential that Patients with diabetes do not miss meals. If they are not on the ward at mealtimes and miss a meal, it is important that it is replaced with a ‘Missed Meal’ (See ‘Missed Meal Menu’ in the blue Menu Folder- Catering Support Information) or a replacement meal including some carbohydrate.

- Missing a meal or not eating enough carbohydrates is a common cause of “hypos” or low blood glucose levels. If you notice that a person with diabetes becomes shaky, dizzy, sweaty or their behaviour suddenly changes notify nursing staff immediately.

- If a Patient with diabetes does not eat all of their carbohydrate at a meal or snack, then Nursing staff should be informed.

- If a Patient with diabetes is unable to eat their meal, then some alternative carbohydrate should be given (for example, a glass of milk, a yoghurt, unsweetened tinned fruit, ice cream, bread).
• Patients are advised to eat regular meals with some carbohydrate food at each meal, for example, to choose a main dish with vegetables or salad alongside some potato, rice, pasta or bread. Remember that some main courses may also contain carbohydrate, for example, pastry, shepherd's pie or fish pie.

• When choosing from the dessert menu, encourage the healthier options. However if the Patient has a poor appetite it may be better to increase their energy and nutritional intake by including hot puddings with custard and additional snacks.

• If the Patient is counting their carbohydrate portions, then they can include puddings, cakes and other sweet items and adjust their medication around what they are eating. The Carbohydrate Counting information sheet for the Core adult and Children’s menus maybe useful for these patients and can be found on the Trust internet and intranet pages as well as the Ward Catering Support Information Folder.

### How Does the Diet Vary with Type 1 Diabetes?

• Most people eat a normal diet but count the total amount of carbohydrate in their meal and take quick acting insulin to match the carbohydrate.

• The Nurse / Ward Housekeeper does not have to calculate Carbohydrates (Carbs) – if the patient is Carb Counting at home then they should be able to do this on the ward. Information on the carbohydrate content of the menu is available to give to the patient, if required in the Ward Catering Support Information Folder. This information can also be found on the intranet.

If individuals in this patient group are at risk of hypo’s they may require a snack at supper time (eg; milk and biscuits, toast or cereal).